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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICANTS: Peled et al.
SERIAL NUMBER: 09/463,320 EXAMINER: Michail A. Belyavskiy, Ph.D.
FILING DATE: January 22, 2000 ART UNIT: 1644
FOR: METHODS OF CONTROLLING PROLIFERATION AND DIFFERENTIATION OF STEM
AND PROGENITOR CELLS

MAIL STOP RCE
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

DECLARATION OF DR. ETAN FIBACH UNDER 37 CFR 1.132

1. I am presently employed as researcher at the Hadassah University Hospital, Department of Hematology, where I am a full professor. I received my Ph. D. degree from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, worked as a post-doctoral fellow at the Cancer Research Center, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, New York, NY, USA, and was a visiting scientist at the Laboratory of Chemical Biology, NIDDK, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD, USA. My Curriculum Vitae is attached.

2. My research focuses on the development of hematopoietic cells. Since the beginning of my career, I have published more than 150 scientific articles in highly regarded journals and books, and have presented my achievements at many international scientific conferences. I am a member of American Society of Hematology and The International Society of Experimental Hematology. I have served on the editorial board of the journal "Experimental Hematology".

3. I am a co-inventor of the subject matter claimed in the above-referenced U.S. patent application. I have read the Office actions issued with respect to the above-identified application.

4. In the most recent Office action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-2, 4-13, 15,

37-45 and 47 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one of ordinary skill in the art to make and/or use the invention. The Examiner states that while the specification clearly discloses methods of hematopoietic cells transplantation and adoptive immunotherapy by expanding and inhibiting differentiation of CD34+ cells ex vivo, the specification is not enabling for any hematopoietic cells. The Examiner further states that the specification does not teach how to effectively expand and at the same time inhibit differentiation of any hematopoietic cells, and that, the art being unpredictable, given the lack of guidance and working examples, it would take undue trial and error experimentation to practice the claimed invention.

5. I would like to emphasize that while expansion of hematopoietic cells is a well established technique in the art, the present invention is based on a novel method for expanding a population of undifferentiated hematopoietic cells for transplantation and at the same time inhibiting their differentiation, by addition of high affinity copper chelators to the culture medium, in both serum-free and serum-supplemented media, enabling more efficient expansion of stem/progenitor cells as compared with methods previously disclosed in the art.

6. The Examiner has stated that the specification provides enablement only for CD34+ cells that were first isolated (enriched), and then used for ex vivo expansion with the methods of the present invention, using copper chelators and cytokines. I wish to take issue with the Examiner's assertion: in the studies and experiments using the protocols of the present invention and which are described in the specification, we demonstrated, for the first time, that the use of copper chelators is effective in enhancing expansion and inhibiting differentiation in both the CD34+ and murine erythroleukemia undifferentiated cell cultures examined. We demonstrated further that copper chelators have a significant effect on differentiation and growth inhibition of all of the undifferentiated and differentiated cell cultures examined (murine erythroleukemia cells, erythroid precursors from peripheral blood, mononucleocytes, hepatocytes, and embryonal stem cells). Thus, I believe that the specification discloses methods for ex-vivo expansion of and inhibition of differentiation of stem/progenitor cells from a broad range of cells.

7. In another set of experiments described in the specification, I observed that, following our protocols for hematopoietic reconstitution of lethally irradiated mice with bone marrow cells expanded ex vivo with the copper chelator TEPA and cytokines, the mice reconstituted with chelator-expanded bone marrow cells achieved superior WBC recovery and survival as compared to cells expanded with cytokines alone.

8. The Examiner has stated that the instant specification does not teach how to extrapolate data obtained from CD34+ cells ex-vivo assay studies to the development of effective protocols for imposing proliferation and at the same time restricting differentiation of any stem and/or progenitor cells. I would like to present the results of recent experiments using the protocols of the present invention for expansion and inhibition of another undifferentiated cell population, AC 133+ cells.

9. AC 133+ cell lines are important cells in the field of hematopoietic stem cell differentiation. The recent identification and isolation of human hematopoietic cells expressing AC133, has provided a better understanding of the relationships between the cell surface phenotype of the subpopulations comprising the human hematopoietic system and their proliferative and differentiative capacity (see, for example, Bhatia, M., Leukemia 2001; 15:1685-88). Studies of cultures of the AC 133+ subpopulation indicate that AC133+ cells have high self-renewal capability, maintain early hematopoietic stem/progenitor cell (HSPC) characteristics, and show superior survival in culture, as compared to CD34+ cells (see Forraz, et al, Br. J. Haematology, 2002;119:516-24). Stem cell selection, and many transplantation protocols have now been amended to include identification of candidate cells as AC 133+ as well as CD34+. In a recent series of experiments, we have found that the methods of the present invention for expansion and inhibition of differentiation of cells for transplantation could be easily applied to AC133+.

10. In the experiments described in Appendix I, we compared the results of the application of the methods of the present invention for expanding hematopoietic cells selected according to CD34+, to those selected according to AC 133+. Cord blood derived AC 133+ or CD34+ cells were expanded in culture medium containing MEM α and 10% FCS, thrombopoietin (TPO), interleukin-6 (IL-6), FLT-3 ligand and stem cell factor (SCF),

each at a final concentration of 50 ng/ml, and 5 μ M tetraethylenepentamine (TEPA) (Appendix I, Table 1).

11. As a first step towards large scale experiments and a clinical trial we replaced a research grade CD34-based separation device with a clinical grade CliniMACS in combination with the AC133 CliniMACS reagent. For this purpose, we compared the cell yields and purity following progenitor cell purification utilizing both CD34 and AC133 reagents.

12. Cord Blood Units (CBUs) were thawed and the cells were divided into two equal fractions. The enrichment efficacy in terms of cell yield (number of eluted cells) and purity (percent of CD34+ or AC133+ cells) was comparable following enrichment on CliniMACS utilizing either CD34 or AC133 reagents (Appendix I, Fig. 1). Indeed, more than 90% of the AC133+ cells were also positive for CD34. A representative FACS analysis is shown in Appendix I, Fig 2. CFUc frequency was also comparable in the progenitor cell fraction enriched by the AC133 reagent to the fraction enriched by the CD34+ reagent: 0.2 ± 1.1 and 0.12 ± 0.7 , respectively.

13. We then compared 3 week parameters of cultures (n=4) initiated with a total of 2.5×10^5 AC133+ or CD34+ cells derived from the same CBU. The yield of TNC was $1065 \times 10^5 \pm 124$ and $760 \times 10^5 \pm 75$, CFUc $81 \times 10^5 \pm 9$ and $83 \times 10^5 \pm 12$, CD34+ cells $43 \pm 7 \times 10^5$ and $39 \pm 9 \times 10^5$, CD34+CD38- cells $12 \pm 3.6 \times 10^5$ and $5.6 \pm 1.3 \times 10^5$, respectively (Appendix I, Fig. 3). In addition, similar proportions of cells expressing myeloid, lymphoid and megakaryocytic phenotype were found in cultures initiated either with CD34+ or AC133+ cells (Appendix I, Fig 4).

14. Based on these experiments we used the AC133 CliniMACS reagent in combination with the CliniMACS separation device for the large-scale evaluation of our three weeks expansion procedure.

15. The AC133 antigen is an important marker for stem/progenitor cells. Numerous phenotypic and functional studies demonstrate that the AC133-enriched population could serve as an alternative approach to CD34+ cell selection and engraftment purposes.

Furthermore, AC133+ selected cells have been already used in clinical transplantation settings without any safety impairment. Accordingly, our first line of experiments demonstrated similar performance using the CliniMACS instrument and the "MiniMACS CD34 progenitor cell isolation kit" (data not shown).

16. For successful ex vivo expansion, both the number of cells recovered following the enrichment procedure and the purity of the progenitor cell fraction are two crucial parameters. Our results demonstrated similar yield and purity of the fractions recovered following the CliniMACS enrichment procedure utilizing either CD34 or AC133 reagent. Furthermore, following a three week large scale clinical grade expansion, the yield of CB-